



Ogden-Jenner Community Meeting #1
Proposed Consolidation of Edward Jenner Elementary Academy of the Arts into
Ogden International School of Chicago
Tuesday, January 9, 2018
Ogden Campus 24 W. Walton Street
5:30 PM – 8:00 PM

CPS Staff in Attendance:

Brian Metcalf, Cheryl Nevins, Hollie Ware-Jaye, Natasha Patterson, Sarah Briggs, Ethel Barker, Ernest Ilarde, Lori Guidry, Dr. Michael Beyer, Dr. Kelly Shelton, Cara Kranz

Community Leaders

Alderman Walter Burnett (Ward 27), Rev. Randall Blakey, Rabbi Seth Limmer

CPS Presentation:

Brian Metcalf (Network 6 Chief of Schools) began by providing a welcome to all, introduced attendees and participants and gave a preview of the meeting objectives. Mr. Metcalf encouraged those that would like to be heard but did not want to speak in public to please email all comments and concerns to transitions@cps.edu or submit a written comment card. Mr. Metcalf reminded every speaker he/she will have two minutes to speak.

Cheryl Nevins (Regional Portfolio Planner, Planning and Data Management) explained the proposed action process.

The legal timeline for this action process was as follows: October 1, 2017 CPS published draft guidelines for school actions; December 1, 2017 CPS proposed school actions and sent notice letters and draft transition plans; January 2018 CPS holds two community meetings and one public hearing prior to any recommendation to the Board; February 2018 or later CPS makes recommendations to Board after community meetings and hearing. Board will vote on recommended school actions at February Board meeting or later.

Ms. Nevins stated that the Jenner/Ogden Steering Committee formed in approximately May 2016. In the past, there have been 3 additional well-attended community meetings, held between February 2017 and April 2017. The committee has created Ogden and Jenner integration efforts for students and parents like JOLT (Jenner Ogden



Learning Together) for students and SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) for teachers. Ms. Nevins related that the entire draft transition plan including early steering committees efforts, changes, and draft plan are available at: [http://cps.edu/About CPS/Policies and guidelines/Pages/transitionsandguidelines.aspx](http://cps.edu/About_CPS/Policies_and_guidelines/Pages/transitionsandguidelines.aspx) under the School Actions tab.

Ms. Nevins stated that the most common desires they heard expressed during these community meetings were: 1) the desire to keep the International Baccalaureate academic program Ogden has built, 2) provide robust support for transitioning students and teachers not previously trained in IB curriculum, 3) Maintain Jenner's strong culture including teachers and staff and continue to honor the N.E.S.T philosophy, 4) provide pre-K for Jenner families, 5) provide transportation between campuses.

Public Comments

Randall Blakey (Executive Pastor, LaSalle Street Church; Board Member – Near North Unity Program, Member – Steering Committee): Three years ago it came to his attention that Jenner was under-enrolled and that Ogden was over-enrolled and that there was an idea to merge the two schools. A community's quality of life plan calls for equitable education and this merger will bring cross cultural learning. He quoted Thurgood Marshall as saying, "Children need to learn together to live together." The committee and community have had the right attitude in creating this plan which has given it fortitude to overcome obstacles, and this right attitude has seen them through three years up to tonight's meeting.

Chris Connolly (Ogden parent) – He is excited and supportive. He thinks this plan is an elegant solution and creates new opportunities. He feels that the steering committee has been moving this proposal along with rigor and transparency. He feels that the plan addresses the concerns of all interested groups and is a strong plan to success. He is personally looking forward to the additional exercise of walking his child to the new school.

Debra Land (Ogden parent) - She volunteers on Ogden campuses and has logged over 100 hours and she lives in this community. She and her husband went to homogenous schools (she in the suburbs and he in Germany) and they had to learn to navigate an unfamiliar and diverse work world when they grew up. She states that the world is even more complex now and children need to learn to judge on abilities, not cultural background. The mission of Ogden is international culture and the school is not a segregated school at all – if you see the children at lunch they are all mixed together and they must function as a diverse team. Beyond the diverse culture, she also feels that this merger will make more efficient use of all three school buildings.



Michele Dreczynski (Near North community member and Steering Committee member) – She lives within the Ogden border and supports the merger to solve the space utilization problems. Campus sharing maximizes financial resources and most of all the merger plan expands and supports additional student access to high quality IB education for the entire Near North side. This will blend two schools' culture and children into an amazing integrated neighborhood school. The community engagement process for this merger dates back to 2013 and it recognizes that International Baccalaureate is a good education model. She feels that this merger will be the most successful merger in CPS history.

D.G. (Walter Payton student, Steering Committee/Advisory Group member) – Recited quote about how the United States has laws against segregation but still practices segregation. She commended Michele Dreczynski for having the dream to build this merged school and she is proud to be on the steering committee. She wants to see this merger happen so that the school can accomplish racial equality together.

David Castro (Ogden staff member)- He appreciates the academic rigor and parent activity at Ogden. It inspires hope in him that Ogden has more romantic notions about education. He has split time between Jenner and Ogden as a staff member. He sees Jenner students studying to jump ahead, believes that the Jenner kids are smart and very welcoming. He feels the teachers at Jenner are great and he wants the Ogden kids to be taught about them. He stated that Ms. Stamps at Jenner is really great in particular. These two schools are inspiring and they make him want to continue with his bachelor's education. He fears that misrepresentation about the merger have misled people and he wanted to make it clear that he feels the Ogden/Jenner merger is for the best.

Kelly Clark (Ogden parent) – She is for the merger. She asks that planning team explore the staggered start time more because the staggered start time would actually make it more difficult for her to pick up her children. Further, she would like later start times explored because it has been shown that later start times are better for kids. She suggests an 8:30 to 9:00 AM start time which would be better for everyone in her opinion.

Clara Kittle (Former Ogden Principal) – She was Principal at Ogden for 3 years and she continues to care about the students. She wanted to offer her perspectives regarding the benefits of the merger. She feels these students have so much to learn from one another. She had an opportunity to chaperone a J.O.L.T. activity where the students of Ogden and Jenner went to a Cubs game together. The Jenner children showed the Ogden children how to use public transportation and the students all communicated well together. Another time some middle school representatives from



both schools went on an adventure/team building outing. The students indicated at that outing that their hopes for the merger were to make new friends, learn something different, and have more learning opportunities. When asked about their fears the students were quiet for a long time, then one student said that he wasn't afraid of the schools joining because he'll accept the Jenner students just like the Ogden students accepted him when he was new. Further, she stated that research and the Ogden/Jenner students have proven that this is what is best for all our students' success.

Teresa Chrobak-Prince (Hearst Elementary principal) – She hopes to quell trepidations. She is a principal at an underserved and neglected CPS schools and has two children in selective enrollment CPS schools. She personally attended a CPS school on the southwest side. She believes that this opportunity will enhance education experiences. The Jenner students will get a more even playing field academically and a more diverse learning community. Her children have personally benefited from a mixed background education and are more understanding now of diverse backgrounds and students should learn tolerance, acceptance, and peace. This merger model will be a model of acceptance. She is an administrator at a school that is very different from Jenner and Ogden but she supports this merger because she wants to see equity in action. She believes that Principal Beyer will make this transition a smooth one and will help provide a respectful, safe, and calm learning environment and she is confident he will ensure the best outcomes.

Seth Limmer (Rabbi, Chicago Sinai Congregation; Member – Jenner/Ogden steering committee) – Ogden is the CPS home of many Sinai members and members of Chicago Sinai see this Near North community as one community including Jenner and Ogden even though outsiders might see the two communities as different. He works on the steering committee and believes that in addition to this merger being an obvious upgrade of education it also helps to ease pervasive racial indifference. This merger should break the separation between the two neighborhoods. Additionally, CPS is still fighting the unjust state formula of school funding. He strongly supports this merger.

Lori Smedley (Ogden Parent, Member – Jenner/Ogden steering committee) – She has three children and she feels lucky to be in this position. She is very glad of the leadership of Principal Beyer and former Principal Croston. The conversation around this merger is for education equality, but also about financial and space utilization advantages.

Juan Alvarez (Jenner boundary resident) – He lives in the Jenner boundary and has two children. He has lived in the Jenner neighborhood awhile and has seen the Jenner students grow. He feels it is important to continue to look at the Near North community and continue to grow it. He thinks this merger is an important part of that growth. He has



been part of this process since its inception in 2016 and he is proud of the CPS leadership and committee support. He especially wants to recognize the efforts of Principal Croston and he wants the N.E.S.T culture to stay with the merged schools.

Heather Yutzy (Belding Elementary principal) – She is the Belding school principal and parent of a CPS 3rd grader. She believes that this merger positions the two schools to be national leaders and that all students will benefit from it. Students don't get any harm from integration. There was a research study from Columbia University that states that exposure to diverse backgrounds helps students develop problem solving and critical thinking skills. This merger can lead the way to show Chicago how to lead progress with dignity and love.

Rebecca Wells (Ogden parent, Member – Jenner/Ogden steering committee) – She states that this merger was not just thrown together and that well over 2000 man and woman hours have already been put into making this merger work. This merger pushes for out of the box thinking, it honors both school cultures and histories, that this action has the ability to be more than just another CPS 'school action.' The committee has engaged multiple organizations and thought leaders, has raised grant money, started the S.E.E.D and J.O.L.T programs, and has created professional development opportunities. All eyes are on this merger and this is an opportunity to be a blueprint for other schools.

Michael Arnold (Ogden parent/Community member) – He thanks the committee for all the work that they have done but he comes from a different standpoint. He has questions about the draft plan: 1) when will it become a final plan? 2) Can you show the community the combined school student data – what will the mixed student body look like? Diversity is good but Ogden is already diverse and will this merger make it less diverse? He also has concerns because Ogden has had four principals in recent years and CPS has had three CEO – can leadership agree the proposed \$1.8 million dollars will be there? Also, Ogden has a unique situation where the 6-8th graders currently get funded at the high school level – will that funding model change with this merger? Further, what about the Title 1 funding that Jenner will lose? Also, is this merger taking money away from other schools?

Besty Olker-Tomes (Ogden parent) – Has a student that has been here for seven years. She believes this is a small step for educational equity. She states that all the parents, teachers, and students have gotten to know each other over the years thanks to the efforts of Principals Croston and Beyer. She has worked toward this merger and states that the merger and transition plan have been well thought through and are continuing to be refined. Her child thinks of Ogden as home and thinks the Jenner/Ogden merger should happen because Jenner might just close otherwise.



Kizzy Mccray (Jenner parent) – She also would like answer to the budget questions asked earlier. She states that this plan seems perfect on paper but she wants to advocate for the teachers at Jenner. Jenner is a well-known school and the Jenner teachers should be allowed to stay there. This plan seems to be perfect but I want to advocate on behalf of teachers at Jenner. She believes that the Jenner name should be kept. She does want to know more about the budget and whether the money going to be there. She does believe her child needs to know his/her neighbors and she wants the merger to go well. She is a parent involved in SEED. She wants the Jenner teachers to stay and knows that they will give Ogden students love.

Aaron Balsam (Jenner community member) – He lives in Jenner neighborhood and supports the merger. He feels this merger is different from other school actions because it doesn't just move students or force them out of their school. This merger will increase community participation, will incentivize families to invest in the community, and will bring more families to the neighborhood in the long run. He believes that the prior boundaries were gerrymandered and breaking them down will help all the students.

Bill Lamm (CTU activist, retired Social Studies teachers) – He is excited that people have put so much energy into this. He has complete confidence in the youth involved but is more nervous about the adults. CPS has a mixed record with school actions and he isn't confident in CPS leadership. The community must be alert to make this merger work. Be careful that CPS doesn't displace teachers from these schools or downsize in the name of efficiency. He warns parents not to drink the Kool-Aid of high stakes tests but instead drink the cool waters of humanity and social justice. Continue the fight.

Sheena Davis – Croston (Wife of former Jenner principal Croston) – Her husband, Rob Croston, is very passionate about the work being done and it brings his heart joy to know the work has continued. Rob transformed the Jenner school climate and culture. She commends the work the community has done and how they have continued the N.E.S.T philosophy. The committee has used data and teamwork to bring the merger together. She believes the owls and the N.E.S.T will come together.

Paul Meric (Ogden parent) – He is a proponent of the merger and thinks it is a great idea for many reasons but he wants to make sure that the plan is protecting students at both schools. He wants his daughter's education to stay high and wants all the teachers to be enhanced. He is expected to perform at his job and he wants all the merged teachers to be able to teach at that high academic level.

Shannon McDonald (Jenner community member) – She is a former teacher at a south side school and was there when the IB curriculum was introduced. She believes that the IB environment is great for students and does not believe that student integration will mean less rigor. All the students will be pushed and students will learn from different



perspectives. The demographics of the school won't change from what she understands and she is for the merger. As a former educator she thinks that the IB curriculum is awesome.

In closing, Mr. Metcalf re-iterated that CPS wants to ensure that the IB rigor will remain at Ogden/Jenner, all teachers will teach IB, and the curriculum and tenants of the school will not change.

The public comment concluded at 7:30 PM and the Chicago Public Schools representatives stayed until 8:00 PM to answer questions and allow additional speakers speak.